

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
MCT-01 AID-05 OMB-01 /071 W
-----068865 090637Z /12

R 090351Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8940
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, IR, PK, AF
SUBJECT: LEAD STORY OF KAYHAN COULD CONTRIBUTE TO FURTHER
SOURING OF AFGHAN RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS

REF: ISLAMABAD 6555

1. SUMMARY. THE JULY 1 EDITION OF TEHRAN'S "KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL," WHICH JUST ARRIVED HERE, CARRIED A LEAD STORY UNDER THE HEADLINE "REBEL GROUP CLAIMS AFGHANISTAN UPRISING." THE STORY CONTAINS FACTUAL INACCURACIES, AS WELL AS DISTORTIONS OF EVENTS WHICH ARE RUMORED TO HAVE OCCURRED HERE OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS. IN THE BIGGER PICTURE, IT IS THE KIND OF REPORT WHICH, SHOULD IT COME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE AFGHAN LEADERSHIP, WILL PROBABLY CONTRIBUTE TO AFGHAN DISTRUST OF FOREIGN NEWS MEDIA (ESPECIALLY IN THE WAKE OF THE WHITLEY-BBC IMBROGLIO), AND PERHAPS AFGHAN SUSPICIONS REGARDING ULTIMATE IRANIAN AND PAKISTANI POLICY TOWARD THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT IN KABUL. END SUMMARY.

2. TEXT OF THE STORY FOLLOWS:
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ISLAMABAD, FRIDAY, REUTER
GUERRILLAS OPPOSING THE NEW PRO-COMMUNIST REGIME IN AFGHANISTAN HAVE LAUNCHED A GENERAL UPRISING IN EIGHT MOUNTAINOUS STATES ENCIRCLING THE CAPITAL KABUL, ACCORDING TO A SPOKESMAN FOR THE GROUP HERE.

THE GROUP, CALLING ITSELF THE NATIONAL RESCUE FRONT, CLAIMS THE ALLEGIANCE OF MORE THAN 100 OF THE 374 MEMBERS OF AFGHANISTAN'S LAST PARLIAMENT BEFORE THE COUP ON APRIL 27 THIS YEAR WHICH BROUGHT PRESIDENT NUR MOHAMMAD TARAKI TO POWER.

IT WAS FORMED BY EIGHT RIGHT-WING PARTIES AND IS HEADED BY A LAW PROFESSOR AT KABUL UNIVERSITY, THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE REBELS SAID.

THE SPOKESMAN, A LAWYER WHO REFUSED TO BE IDENTIFIED, GAVE AN ACCOUNT OF CLASHES BETWEEN GOVERNMENT TROOPS AND GUERRILLAS WHICH HE SAID HAD TAKEN PLACE IN A BATTLE IN KONAR PROVINCE NEAR THE BORDER WITH PAKISTAN LAST WEEK.

THE REPORT COULD NOT BE CONFIRMED FROM OTHER SOURCES, BUT PRESIDENT TARAKI TOLD A CORRESPONDENT OF THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION LAST WEEK THERE HAD BEEN TROUBLE IN KONAR PROVINCE.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT ALSO DISARMED AN ARMY DIVISION, FEARING THAT IT WAS GOING TO ADVANCE ON THE CAPITAL, KABUL.

HE ALSO CLAIMED SEVERAL PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN INCIDENTS IN THE LAST FEW DAYS IN PAKTIA PROVINCE, SOUTH OF KABUL,) AND TO THE NORTH OF KONAR PROVINCE.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT IN THE ACTION IN KONAR PROVINCE, GOVERNMENT FORCES MARCHED UP TWO PARALLEL VALLEYS TO SURROUND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GUERRILLAS HOLED UP IN THE HILLS. THE GUERRILLAS LOST ONE KILLED AND SEVEN INJURED WHILE KILLING 20 SOLDIERS, THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

NEARBY TRIBESMEN RUSHED TO HELP THE GUERRILLAS, WHO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT TROOPS' IGNORANCE OF THE MOUNTAIN TERRAIN.

AT KATAWUZ IN PAKTIA PROVINCE PEOPLE ATTACHED ARMY PICKETS AND BURNT THEIR TENTS ON JUNE 26. THREE OF THE ATTACKERS WERE KILLED AND CASUALTIES AMONG THE ARMY WERE UNKNOWN, THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

IN THE ACTION NORTH OF KONAR PROVINCE, ABOUT 30 PEOPLE ARMED WITH RIFLES, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AND A GRENADE ATTACKED A GOVERNMENT OFFICE, KILLING FIVE PEOPLE AND WOUNDING FOUR, HE SAID.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID LOYAL TROOPS SURROUNDED THE RICH KHOOR (BEARDESS) DIVISION OF THE AFGHAN ARMY AND SEIZED ITS ARMOUR ABOUT 10 DAYS AGO. EIGHTY OFFICERS FROM THE DIVISION, WHICH IS STATIONED ABOUT 15 KMS FROM KABUL, WERE ARRESTED.

THE FRONT IS GROUPED AROUND THE JAMAT ISLAMI AFGHANISTAN PARTY, WHICH TOOK PART IN A 1975 UPRISING AGAINST THE LATE PRESIDENT MOHAMMAD DAOUD, KILLED IN THE APRIL COUP.

SOME, BUT NOT ALL, OF THE PROVINCES NAMED BY THE SPOKESMAN ARE INHABITED BY PUSHTU SPEAKERS, WHO LOST THEIR DOMINANT POSITION IN AFGHANISTAN AFTER THE COUP. END TEXT.

3. COMMENT: THE REPORT APPEARS TO BE BASED SOLELY ON THE ALLEGATIONS OF ONE "SPOKESMAN" FOR THE "NATIONAL RESCUE FRONT" IN ISLAMABAD. WE PRESUME THAT THIS IS THE SAME GROUP PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED AS THE "NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF AFGHANISTAN" (REFTEL), WHICH ALSO CLAIMED TO BE A COALITION OF EIGHT POLITICAL PARTIES HEADED BY A FORMER KABUL UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, A DR. BURHANUDDIN.

4. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THERE ARE INACCURACIES IN THE "KAYHAN" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REPORT, AND THE STORY IN ESSENCE REPRESENTS A COLLECTION OF RUMORS REGARDING THE DOMESTIC SCENE IN AFGHANISTAN, BUT ENHANCED WITH CONSIDERABLE IMAGINATION. SHOULD THE STORY COME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE AFGHAN LEADERSHIP (AND THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY HERE IS ALREADY EXCHANGING VIEWS ABOUT THE VERACITY, IF ANY, OF THE "KAYHAN" ARTICLE), IT COULD WELL INCREASE AFGHAN DISTRUST OF FOREIGN NEWS MEDIA, AND COULD EXACERBATE SUSPICIONS REGARDING ULTIMATE IRANIAN AND PAKISTANI POLICIES TOWARD THE NEW REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT IN KABUL.
AMSTUTZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KABUL05498
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780281-0756
Format: TEL
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780782/aaaacqwe.tel
Line Count: 146
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e397e378-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 ISLAMABAD 6555
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2076392
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEAD STORY OF KAYHAN COULD CONTRIBUTE TO FURTHER SOURING OF AFGHAN RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, IR, PK, AF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e397e378-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014